WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of automatic detection of a graduated compression paddle comprising the steps of:

acquiring a base digital image containing the paddle, the base image being subdivided into rows of N elementary pixels respectively assigned luminous intensity values, the rows of elementary pixels all being parallel to a general direction of graduation of the paddle;

determining N autocorrelations of the vector of luminous intensity values associated with the row of elementary pixels are made for each row, with respectively the vector and the N-1 vectors successively shifted by 1 elementary pixel, so as to obtain for each row a vector of N autocorrelation values;

carrying out a Fourier transform treatment on each autocorrelation vector, in order to obtain an energy frequency spectrum;

comparing the energy value at the frequency of the graduated marks for each spectrum with a predetermined threshold value; and

detecting the paddle.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein the base image is subdivided into rows of N cells of n x n base pixels and each cell is transformed into an elementary pixel, the luminous intensity value of the elementary pixel being equal to the mean of the luminous intensity values respectively associated with the base pixels of the cell.

3. The method according to claim 1 wherein acquisition of the image is carried out in an automatic mode, in which the adjustment of the exposure parameters is determined from a table of automatic optimization of parameters (AOP).

4. The method according to claim 2 wherein acquisition of the image is carried out in an automatic mode, in which the adjustment of the exposure parameters is determined from a table of automatic optimization of parameters (AOP).

5. The method according to claim 3 wherein acquisition of the image is carried out in an automatic mode, in which the adjustment of the exposure parameters is determined from a table of automatic optimization of parameters (AOP).

6. A device for automatic detection of a graduated compression paddle comprising:

means for acquisition of a digital base image containing the paddle;

means for subdivision of the base image into rows of N elementary pixels respectively assigned luminous intensity values, the rows of elementary pixels all being parallel to a general direction of graduation of the paddle;

means capable of carrying out for each row N autocorrelations of the vector of luminous intensity values associated with the row of elementary pixels, with respectively the vector and the N-1 vectors successively shifted by 1 elementary pixel, so as to obtain for each row a vector of N autocorrelation values;

means for treatment capable of carrying out a Fourier transform treatment on each autocorrelation vector, so as to obtain an energy frequency spectrum;

means for comparison capable of comparing the energy value at the frequency of the graduated marks with a predetermined threshold value for each spectrum; and

means for detection capable of deducing the presence of the paddle from the result of the comparison.

7. The device according to claim 6 wherein the means for subdivision are capable of subdividing the base image into rows of N cells of n x n base pixels, and contain means for transformation capable of transforming each cell into an elementary pixel, the luminous intensity value of the elementary pixel being equal to the mean of the luminous intensity values respectively associated with the base pixels of the cell.

8. A device for automatic detection of a graduated compression capable of applying the method according to claim 1.

9. Computer program product, recorded on a support usable in a processor, containing program code means employing the method according to claim 1 when the product is executed within the processor.